

## **Charter School Operators to Learn Business, Education Skills Through Federal Grant**

Starting in Summer 2002, charter school operators from across the country will take part in an innovative leadership development program designed to improve student learning, ensure that charter school funding is spent wisely, and create benchmarks to measure successful school leadership in a market-based environment. ASU West's Leadership for Educational Entrepreneurs (LEE) program is funded by a two-year, \$716,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

"As I have conducted research into charter schools, I've observed that most charter school leaders are business people turned educators or educators turned business people," says Eleanor Perry, graduate studies department chairwoman at ASU West's College of Education. "Some lack either the business or education skills required to successfully operate a charter school."

The LEE program is the first structured university program aimed at the growing charter industry. Perry originally developed the LEE concept to meet the needs of Arizona charter school operators. "The U.S. Department of Education was so impressed with the idea that they suggested I expand it into a national model," Perry says.

LEE will offer two levels of academic preparation: an 18-hour Supervisory certificate, and a 36-hour Master's degree in Educational Administration with a Concentration in Business. The rigorous course work, designed for busy school operators, will have a unique delivery system. Students will learn on-line, at regionally facilitated sites across the country, and at summer institutes. Perry is exploring potential regional sites including Oregon, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Florida, and Minnesota. ASU West's campus will be the home of the summer institutes.

In addition to ASU West faculty from the School of Management and the College of Education, Perry is recruiting experts from institutions including Villanova University, the University of Florida, and the Colorado Department of Education to serve as LEE faculty. The faculty will meet for an orientation/retreat in June 2002, prior to LEE Fellows arriving for their first classes during the summer institute.

"In keeping with the spirit of the grant, Fellows will come from all over the country and may already be charter school leaders," Perry says. "They will be

charged the normal ASU West tuition rate, but the grant will pay for scholarships covering up to 80 percent of that tuition, as well as some travel for the summer institutes.”

Perry’s research indicates that well-run charter schools aid students who respond favorably to an alternative method of education. “Some students just don’t make it in a larger environment,” Perry says. “Many charter schools want to do what is best for the students, and we know that it takes good, strong leadership to promote increased student achievement. So the grant is timely and satisfies the needs of a growing population across the country.”

The LEE program will benefit from partnerships Perry has established with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratories (NWREL), Arizona Charter Schools Association (ACSA), and the Association for Performance Based Assessment (APBA). “Each partner brings extensive expertise in developing tools and resources for charter school leaders, including the NWREL’s ‘Charter Starters Resource Kit’ and APBA’s peer review assessment process,” Perry says.

For information on applying to become one of the first 25 Fellows of the LEE program, email [LEEP@asu.edu](mailto:LEEP@asu.edu).